

Sexually Transmitted Disease

Between the years of 1995 and 1999 Tennessee experienced a 19.8 percent decrease in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) for teens ages 15 to 17, and an 8.6 percent decrease in STDs in the general population. This is good news for Tennessee teens, compared to the years of 1994 and 1995 when STDs for teens ages 15 to 17 increased by 68.8 percent

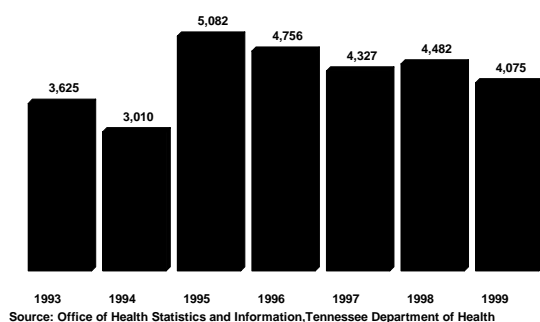
The discouraging news is the apparent disparity between the proportion of sexually transmitted disease cases for females and males and African-American and white teens. African-American teens were eight times more likely to experience a sexually transmitted disease than white teens, and females contracted STDs four times more often than males in the 15 to 17 age group.

One explanation for the high ratio of STDs in females compared to males is the prevalence of Chlamydia trachomatis infections and increased screening efforts. Screening efforts have focused on females in the 15 to 19 age group due to the high risk for pelvic inflammatory disease, tubal pregnancies, and infertility. According to the STD Surveillance report, 1998, trends in females are determined more by screening practices. Females tend to be asymptomatic with many STDs. As a result, health officials have stepped up efforts to screen for the disease during physical exams. National figures for 1998 indicate that females are five times more likely to contract chlamydia than males in the 15 to 19 age group.

Compared to older adults, adolescents (10 to 19 years old) and young adults (20 to 24 years old) are at higher risk for acquiring STDs. They may be more likely to have multiple (sequential or concurrent) sexual partners rather than a single longer-term relationship, they may be more likely

to engage in unprotected intercourse, and they may select partners at higher risk (CDC, 1998).

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Total Number of Cases for Teens 15-17
1993-1999**



What Works

- Implementation of education programs to educate young people in the area of STD's and long range health implications.
- School Health education efforts that reach youth before they reach the years of sexual activity.
- Monitoring the STD rates in a community and setting goals and objectives for reduction of rates.
- Creating an environment to educate adults and increase awareness of the extent of risk behaviors among young people.
- Promotion of state level changes that support health education and coordinated school health programs.

Sexually transmitted diseases are among the most common infectious diseases in the United States today. More than 20 STDs have now been identified, affecting more than 13 million men and women with a conservative cost estimate in excess of \$8.4 billion per year.

Nearly two thirds of all STDs occur in people younger than 25 years of age. Health problems